

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8889

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 7072

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IS, SY

SUBJECT: ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS: THE MAPAM VIEW

1. IN RECENT CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, NATAN PELED, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF KIBBUTZ FEDERATION AFFILIATED WITH MAPAM PARTY (HAKIBUTZ HAARTZI) DISCUSSED QUESTION OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS ON GOLAN HEIGHTS. (PELED IN PAST HAS BEEN MK, AMBASSADOR TO AUSTRIA, AND MINISTER OF IMMIGRANT ABSORPTION.)
2. PELED SAID HIS FEDERATION AND MAPAM PARTY WOULD BE ABLE TO COUNTENANCE THE REMOVAL OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS FROM THE GOLAN, BUT ONLY RPT ONLY IN THE CONTEXT OF A FINAL PEACE AGREEMENT THAT ENTAILED THE REMOVAL OF SETTLEMENTS. HE DISTINGUISHED THIS VIEW FROM TWO OTHERS WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS PREVALENT WITHIN THE LABOR ALIGNMENT: THAT THERE IS NO ROOM AT ALL FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PRESENT LINES AND THAT NOTHING BEYOND COSMETIC CHANGES WHICH DO NOT AFFECT ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS ARE ACCEPTABLE IN ANY TIME FRAME.

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3. HE GAVE THREE REASONS FOR HIS OWN STRONG ENDORSEMENT OF

THIS POSITION. OBJECTIVELY, SINCE IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE WHAT SYRIA CAN OFFER POLITICALLY FOR AN INTERIM AGREEMENT, REMOVAL OF SETTLEMENTS FOR ANYTHING LESS THAN A PEACE AGREEMENT WOULD SET A PRECEDENT WHICH SYRIA WOULD BE TEMPTED TO REPEAT AGAIN AND AGAIN, WITH NO CERTAINTY AS TO WHERE THE PROCESS MIGHT STOP. DOMESTICALLY, RABIN IS AWARE THAT HE WOULD BE PLAYING WITH FIRE TO SUGGEST ABANDONMENT OF SETTLEMENTS, EVEN IF SYRIA WERE WILLING TO MAKE POLITICAL CONCESSIONS. MILITARILY, THE SETTLEMENTS CLOSEST TO THE DISENGAGEMENT LINE HAVE BEEN INCORPORATED INTO THE DEFENSE NETWORK IN SUCH A WAY THAT IT WOULD BE FOOLHARDY TO REMOVE THEM UNTIL PEACE IS IN SIGHT.

4. RECOGNIZING THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN ANY NEGOTIATIONS ON GOLAN, PELED THOUGHT ALL PARTIES SHOULD TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT THE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH JORDAN AS A NEXT STEP, SINCE COMPARED TO THE GOLAN THERE IS MUCH MORE ROOM FOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL ON THE WEST BANK WITHOUT ENDANGERING THE INTEGRITY OF THE STATE.

5. PELED EMPHASIZED THAT MAPAM WAS IN COMPLETE ACCORD WITH THE POSITION RABIN HAS ARTICULATED ON MANY OCCASIONS-- ISRAEL WILL NOT COME DOWN FROM THE HEIGHTS BUT THE PRESENT LINE WILL NOT NECESSARILY BE THE PEACE BORDER. HE RECALLED THAT SINCE 1967 MAPAM HAS CONTENDED THAT IT MIGHT BE NECESSARY FOR ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS NEAR THE CEASE-FIRE LINE TO BE REMOVED FOR THE SAKE OF PEACE WITH SYRIA. FOR THIS REASON, MAPAM HAS ESTABLISHED ITS OWN TWO GOLAN SETTLEMENTS IN AREAS WHICH IT ASSUMES WILL REMAIN IN ISRAELI HANDS AFTER PEACE WITH SYRIA IS REACHED. (NOTE: ONE, SNIR, IS ALMOST DIRECTLY ON THE PRE-1967 BORDER. GESHUR, HOWEVER, LIES MORE THAN NINE MILES FROM MILES INTO SYRIAN TERRITORY.) PELED CONFIRMED THAT KIBBUTZ HAARTZI IS CURRENTLY PLANNING TO ESTABLISH A THIRD SETTLEMENT ON THE GOLAN, SLIGHTLY WEST OF GESHUR.

6. COMMENT: IT SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND THAT WITHIN THE RULING COALITION MAPAM HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN THE ELEMENT MOST PREPARED TO ENDORSE SUBSTANTIAL TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS IN RETURN FOR PEACE WITH THE ARAB STATES. IT PROBABLY
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REPRESENTS TODAY THE OUTER LIMIT OF THINKING WITHIN THE CABINET ON THE ISSUE OF WITHDRAWAL ON THE GOLAN.
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